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ABSTRACT

The study investigated self concept, environmental support, environmental availability, and delinquency proneness in 95 gifted sixth grade rural students. Ss were given an Environmental Support/Environmental Availability questionnaire in which environmental support was a measure of perceived parental support divided by the number of activities perceived available, and environmental availability was the number of desired possible activities divided by the total number of both possible and impossible activities. Also given were the Coopersmith Self Concept Inventory and questions to identify delinquency proneness. A high relationship was found between perceived parental support, high self concept, and high giftedness in the female Ss, whereas male gifted Ss tended to have high perceived parental support but low self concept. Highly gifted females perceived a greater amount of environmental availability, while males who perceived high environmental availability were perceived as low gifted, low self concept, and low environmental support. Males and females perceived as leaders by teachers tended to have low self concepts. The Ss perceived as scientific by teachers were low in self concept while the Ss perceived as scientific by peers were high in self concept. Peers tended to perceive giftedness in Ss with high self concept while teachers tended to perceive giftedness in low self concept Ss. The gifted delinquency prone Ss were perceived as leaders, had low self concepts, low perceived environmental support, and high environmental availability. (Author/DB)

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SELF CONCEPT AS IT IS RELATED TO DEGREES OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL AVAILABILITY, GIFTEDNESS, AND DELINQUENCY PRONENESS

Study funded by a grant from the American Association for Gifted Children and the Office of Student Development, Univ. of Wisconsin-Platteville, Wisconsin

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ABSTRACT

Giftedness measured by peer and teacher evaluation, IQ (116 or above on group test) and achievement scores (84th percentile and above) were procured from 256 sixth grade students in four rural Wisconsin communities. Ninety-five subjects were selected as gifted.

Delinquency proneness was measured on the peer and teacher evaluation by 5 peer questions and 2 teacher questions the students received. As a group 70% of the Delinquency Proneness votes were identified as Delinquent Prone. 28 Delinquency Prone students were identified. Of these, eight were gifted.

The 95 gifted students completed an Environmental Support/ Environmental Availability form to measure the amount of perceived parental support and available resources. Self Concept was measured by the Coopersmith Self Concept Inventory. The Self Concept scores were divided into high, medium, and low.

There was a high relationship between perceived parental support, high Self Concept, and high Giftedness in the female subjects. There was a high relationship between perceived parental support and perceived Giftedness in males, but the most Gifted males had low Self Concepts. When comparing the Gifted subjects' Self Concepts with a Non-Gifted sampling, Gifted subjects had a much higher average Self Concept.

Highly Gifted females perceived a greater amount of Environmental Availability than highly Gifted males, and they also had high Self Concepts

while males who perceived high Environmental Availability were perceived as low Gifted, low Self Concept and low Support.

It was found that males and females who were perceived as leaders by teachers tended to have low Self Concepts. The subjects the teachers perceived as scientific were low in Self Concept while the subjects perceived as scientific by peers were high Self Concept. Peers tended to perceive Giftedness in high Self Concept subjects while teachers perceived Giftedness in low Self Concept subjects. The gifted Delinquency Prone subjects were perceived as leaders, had low Self Concepts, perceived low Environmental Support and High Environmental Availability.

LITERATURE REVIEW

"Of the good in you I can speak, but not of the evil. For what is evil but good tortured by its own hunger and thirst?

Verily when good is hungry it seeks food even in dark caves, and when it thirsts, drinks even of dead waters.

In your longing for your giant self lies your goodness; and that longing is in all of you."

Kahil Gabrin - "The Prophet"

The attempt to measure a person's self concept has been of interest to many investigators. Coopersmith (1967), Rosenberg (1967), Gallagher (1967), have attempted to devise and/or use a self concept measurement to better understand how a person internally values him/herself and also how this may affect his/her intellectual abilities.

It has been found that self concept inventories have a significant relationship when measuring a person's ability to exercise his/her intellect.

Coopersmith and Rosenberg found that boys with high self concepts were significantly higher in achievement and leadership abilities than low self concept boys. Katzenmeyer (1967) found that when verbal abilities were high, self concept scores tended to be high. This suggests that verbal performance may be an indicator of how the individual perceives himself. Maslow (1941) stated that if a person perceived him/herself in positive ways, there would be greater ability to use potential (intellectual, physical, and emotional) in self actualizing ways. It has also been found in many studies of gifted children that their self concepts tend to be higher than non-gifted children. A high self concept seems to associate with freeing a person's intellect to be used in many ways.

Many investigators, Briggs (1970), Coopersmith (1967), Rosenberg (1969), Neill (1960), Horney (1945) contend that the self concept is a measure of how the person or child is accepted by significant others in the home environment. Coopersmith found four basic needs common to high self concepts which were highly related to the home environment: (1) respect, (2) acceptance, (3) limit setting from significant others, and (4) significant others also have high self concepts.[1]

Coopersmith (1967), as well as most researchers on self concept, do not include female subjects and, therefore, caution should be exercised when making interpretations on female subjects.

Gallagher and Jenne (1967) found in their studies of gifted males and females, that when comparing self concept with various thinking abilities (divergent, convergent, evaluative thinking and cognitive memory) there are some differences between the sexes. When comparing males and females who had

high IQs and were high divergent thinkers, they found that the females were perceiving their mothers as granting much independence, and boys were perceiving their mothers as controlling and restrictive. When comparing Environmental Availability (activities in a given community which a subject perceives as accessible to him/her) for gifted males and females, King (1979) found that gifted females perceived more availability than gifted males. When correlating Environmental Availability and Environmental Support (perceived emotional, intellectual and physical and financial support), King (1980) found that the Environmental Support/Environmental Availability correlation was significant for both sexes at .05, but the females' correlation was higher. This tends to suggest that gifted females perceived more activities available, thus the suggestion of more perceived independence while the males perceived less activities available and more support, thus possibly perceiving more restriction from significant others.

This studies purpose was to investigate the relationship between self concept and Environmental Support, Environmental Availability, giftedness and Delinquency Proneness. It was determined from the literature that high self concept females would be highly gifted, perceive high Environmental Support and high Environmental Availability, while the high self concept males would be perceiving high Environmental Support, low Environmental Availability and would be highly gifted. Coopersmith (1967) suggests that there may be some males who are highly gifted and perceiving high Environmental Support but are low in self concept. This may result from realizing their full potential, thus separating themselves from their peers, hence demanding more of themselves. They may also receive some social ostracism, Tannenbaum (1960), which may cause the self concept to lower. Thus, the low self concept males would be from two contrasting groups, the highly gifted, high Environmental Support, low Environmental

Availability group, and the low gifted, low Environmental Support, high Environmental Availability, and Delinquent Prone group, King (1979).

It was concluded from the literature that the gifted subjects would have a higher average self concept than the non-gifted.

Subjects

The 95 gifted subjects for this study were culled from 256 sixth graders in four rural communities. Giftedness was estimated by three major criteria:

1. An IQ score of 116 or above, and/or an achievement score of 84% or above; and/or
2. Two or more teacher giftedness recommendations in student achievement, leadership, creativity, and/or science ability; and/or
3. Being placed in the upper 15% of the students in each school according to peer estimation of leadership, science, sports, achievement, and/or creativity.

Each of the gifted criteria was given a value of 33%. If a student had an IQ of 140 or above and an achievement score of 99%, then he/she was 33% gifted by the first criteria. If that student was also perceived as gifted by peers in at least 4 categories of giftedness, that student received 33% by peer estimation. If that student was perceived as gifted by teachers in all 4 categories, he/she again received 33%. Thus the student was 100% gifted by the criteria of this study.

Method

The 95 gifted subjects were given an "Environmental Support/Environmental Availability" form and a Self Concept inventory to complete. The Environmental Support/Environmental Availability form consisted of 97 activities from which the subjects could consider which he/she perceived as available in his community for his/her use. After each activity were three numbers--(1) self, (2) peers, and (3) parents. There were also three Environmental Support statements which the subjects were to relate to themselves; "who cares," "who helps," and "who is proud." If the gifted subject perceived their peers were proud and helped, they circled the 2; if they thought their parents were proud, helped and cared, they circled the 3. If they felt both were proud, they circled both. Figure 1 is an excerpt from the Environmental Support/Environmental Availability form.

Circle w if activity is possible to do. Cross out w if you can't do it but want to. Don't do anything if you don't want to do it.		Who cares 123	Who helps 123	Who is proud 123
Go for bike rides	w	123	123	123
Go for trail bike rides	w	123	123	123
Go for boat rides	w	123	123	123
Go for snowmobile rides	w	123	123	123

Figure 1: Excerpt from Environmental Support/Environmental Availability form.

* 1 - friends same age, 2 - friends who are older, 3 - parent or parents

By totaling all activities the subject wanted to do and could do plus couldn't do but wanted to do, the number of desired activities was found. The possible activities was then subtracted from the total desired activities and divi

divided into the total desired activities. This number was multiplied by 100 to find the percentage of Environmental Availability.

$$\frac{\text{Desired possible activities}}{\text{Desired possible and impossible activities}} \times 100 = \% \text{ of Environmental Availability.}$$

The percentage of support was determined by the three categories after each activity: 1. Who cares, 2. Who helps, and 3. Who is proud. Each activity the subject perceived available was multiplied by three to find the total possible Environmental Support. The total actual perceived support was added together and from this score the % of ES was found.

$$\frac{\text{No. of votes of perceived parental support}}{\text{No. of activities perceived available x 3}} \times 100 = \text{Environmental Support}$$

The Coopersmith Self Concept Inventory was used as the Self Concept measurement. There were 50 questions and the subjects were to check whether the statement was like or unlike them.

Within this inventory were three types of questions relating to self, social interactions, and parents. The Self Concept scores were divided into three groups, high self concept (38 and above), medium (29-37) and low (28 and below.)

Results

Table I indicates the ranges of Self Concept scores for all males and females. It appears from this data that the Gifted males average a higher Self Concept than the Gifted females. With the Gifted subjects is a sampling of 43 Non-gifted sixth grade students' scores. These 43 Non-gifted students were selected from the original pool of 256 students. This was again divided by sex.

Table I

Frequency Distribution of 95 Gifted Subjects and 43 Non-gifted Students' Self Concepts

		Gifted		Non-gifted	
Self Concept		N	%	N	%
Males	High	11	25	1	3
	Medium	23	52	11	38
	Low	(6) 10	23	17	59
	Total	44	100	29	100
	Average Raw Score	32.6			24.1
Females	High	9	18	0	0
	Medium	(1) 23	45	1	7
	Low	(1) 19	37	13	93
	Total	51	100	14	100
	Average Raw Score	30.3			16.8
Total	High	20	21	1	2
	Medium	46	51	12	28
	Low	29	30	30	70
	Total	95	100	43	100
	Average Raw Score	31.3			21.5

( ) Delinquent Prone are located in these parenthesis

Because of the wide range of scores for the 95 subjects, the extreme high and low for high Self Concept and low Self Concept (15 male and 15 female high Self Concept) were more closely investigated. Table II presents the averages of the 15 high Self Concept males and females separately for Environmental Availability, Environmental Support, and Giftedness. Also, the averages for the total subjects are given. Both sexes' average scores are relatively close, except for the Environmental Availability score which is higher for the females. There were no delinquent prone subjects in this group.

Table II

The 15 Highest Self Concept Males and 15 Highest Self Concept Females and the Average Environmental Availability, Environmental Support, and Giftedness

	Self Concept	Environmental Support	Environmental Availability	Gifted-ness	Delinquency Proneness
Males (Upper 15)	38.81	44.87	61.73	33.13	0
Females (Upper 15)	39.67	43.73	69.00	32.87	0
Total (Total 95)	31.30	43.76	68.43	33.70	0

* It should be remembered that the 15 highest males and 15 highest females in self concept together is one-third of the gifted population.

The average Environmental Support, Environmental Availability, Giftedness and Self Concept scores for males and females in the 15 extreme high Concept and 15 extreme low Self Concepts can be found in Table III. Seven of the eight identified Delinquent Prone subjects were found in the extreme low Self Concept group.

Table III

Average Environmental Support, Environmental Availability and Giftedness for the 15 Males and Females with Lowest Self Concept and Highest Self Concept

Self Concept		Environmental Support	Environmental Availability	Giftedness	Self Concept
High	Male	46	49	31	39
	Female	49	69	33	40
Low	Male	54	75	43	30
	Female	35	60	29	20

It can be noticed that males and females in the high Self Concept extreme have scores in Environmental Support, Giftedness and Self Concept which are somewhat similar, but the Environmental Availability is twenty points higher for the females. With the low Self Concept extremes, the scores differ significantly in all four categories. It should be noted that the low Self Concept males consist of the eight most Gifted males and the six most delinquent prone males. The delinquent prone males raise the Environmental Availability average while the highly Gifted males raise the Environmental Support and Giftedness averages.

Table IV presents the frequency distribution for all males and females. The females tend to perceive lower support than the males. The females are also perceiving high Environmental Availability, and lower in Giftedness.

Table IV

Frequency Distribution of All Males and Females with Self Concept, Environmental Support, Environmental Availability and Giftedness

Self Concept		Environmental Support	Environmental Availability	Giftedness	Self Concept
Males	High	10	25 (6)	9	11
	Medium	20	14	20	23
	Low	14 (6)	5	15 (6)	10 (6)
Females	High	8	28	8	9
	Medium	23 (2)	19	20	23 (1)
	Low	20	4 (2)	23 (2)	19 (1)

( ) indicates Delinquent Prone. There were a total of 6 Delinquent Prone boys and 2 Delinquent Prone girls in the study.

The IQ and achievement score frequency distribution and percentages for the males and females is in Table V. The IQ scores were divided by ranges: high (130 and above), medium (120 - 129), and low (119 and below), and achievement scores were divided by ranges: high (99 - 96), medium (95 - 88), and low (87 and below.)

Table V

IQ and Achievement Score Frequency Distribution and Percentages for the 95 Gifted Subjects by Sex

	IQ Score								Achievement Score							
	High		%		Medium		%	Low	%		High		%	Medium		%	Low	%
Male	(3)	14	32	(3)	20		45	10	25	(1)	22		50	(2)	12	(2) 27	(2) 10	23
Female	(2)	6	12		30		59	15	29		10		20		21	41	(2) 20	39

( ) indicates Delinquent Prone subjects.

Table VI presents the Self Concept correlations with all variables of the total subjects. There is a significant correlation between Environmental Support and a high Self Concept. There is a negative correlation for females and total subjects perceived as leaders by teachers, and also a negative correlation for females perceived as leaders by peers but not significant.

The subjects teachers perceived as achieving had a negative significant correlation for males and negative but not significant for total. When correlating peers perception of achievement with Self Concept, it was significant for the total.

The subjects perceived as scientific by teachers had a significant and negative correlation for the total, males and females. The subjects perceived as the most Gifted (when combining creativity, science, sports, achievement, and leadership) had a significant correlation for total and for females, but it was not significant for males.

Table VI

Correlation Coefficients of the Gifted Subjects Self Concepts

	Number of Subjects			Males		(no. of)	Females		(no. of)
SC/IQ and Ach	95	.115	ns	.039	ns	(44)	.117	ns	(51)
SC/% Gifted	95	.09	ns	.069	ns	(44)	.051	ns	(51)
ES/SC	95	.279	****	.227	ns	(44)	.319	***	(51)
EA/SC	95	.052	ns	-.195	ns	(44)	.066	ns	(51)
Leadership-teacher/SC	36	-.316	*	-.38	ns	(16)	-.351	*	(20)
Leadership-peer/SC	22	.142	ns	.28	ns	(16)	-.277	ns	(6)
Science-peer/SC	14	.0	ns	.0	ns	(10)	.0	ns	(4)
Ach/teacher/SC	46	-.02	ns	-.356	*	(21)	.154	ns	(25)
Ach-peer/SC	25	.323	*	.141	ns	(12)	.386	ns	(13)
Science-teacher/SC	15	-.63	****	-.582	**	(10)	-.804	**	(5)
Creativity-teacher/SC	29	.037	ns	-.065	ns	(11)	.129	ns	(18)
Creativity-peer/SC	33	.143	ns	.201	ns	(13)	.29	ns	(20)
Sports/SC	10	.0	ns	.0	ns	(6)	.0	ns	(4)
Total-teacher/SC	55	-.107	ns	-.125	ns	(26)	-.111	ns	(52)
Total-peer/SC	40	.307	**	.201	ns	(17)	.403	**	(23)

NS = not significant

* = .1

** = .05

*** = .02

**** = .01

SC = Self Concept

ES = Environmental Support

GS = Gifted Subject

Ach = Achievement

EA = Environmental Availability

Results

It was found that as the female subjects perceived more Environmental Support and Environmental Availability they had higher Self Concepts and were perceived as more Gifted. The female subjects with high Self Concepts perceived that their parents were proud of them, and answered parental questions on the Self Concept inventory positively.

The highly Gifted males with low Self Concepts perceived their parents as proud of them and they answered the parental questions on the Self Concept inventory positively.

Males who were the lowest in Self Concept were from two contrasting groups. Eight were perceived as highly Gifted with high IQ and Achievement, high Environmental Support and low Environmental Availability while six were perceived as delinquent prone as determined by King (1979) with low Giftedness, low Environmental Support and high Environmental Availability and high IQ. Why is the highly Gifted, highly Supported male low in Self Concept? As was suggested at the beginning of the paper, they are no longer judging themselves with their peers, but are perceiving their own full potential, thus they tend to be more demanding of themselves, hence, lower in Self Concept.

The subjects that the teachers perceived as leaders were low in Self Concept. It was also found that the female subjects perceived as leaders by peers were low in Self Concept. Five of the seven Gifted delinquent prone subjects were perceived as leaders.

It was noticed that there were fewer females in the high IQ range (130 and above) and high achievement range (99-95). It must be stated that the females as a group perceived lower amounts of support than the males. This lack of perceived support could be the reason for their lower signs of giftedness.

The gifted delinquent prone subjects (six males and two females) as determined by King (1979) were all low in Self Concept except for one female who was in the medium range. The delinquent prone males all had low Environmental Support, high Environmental Availability, low Giftedness but high IQ and/or Achievement scores, while the females had low Environmental Support, low Environmental Availability, low Giftedness but high IQ and/or Achievement scores.

It was found that the subjects who were perceived by teachers as scientific were low in Self Concept. The peers perceived a somewhat different group as sciencitific, and they had high Self Concepts. Peer judgement of scientifically gifted persons tends to choose those with high Self Concepts, while teachers choose subjects with low Self Concepts, both males and females.

When observing the 16 subjects with the lowest Environmental Availability, of the six females one was delinquent prone. The six males in low Environmental Availability were not delinquent prone and perceived high Environmental Support, while the females all perceived low Support. From this, it can be suggested that males who perceive large amounts of freedom with no Support become delinquent prone.

It appears from this study that for females and males to use their full intellectual abilities, they must perceive much support from their parents. It also appears that females must perceive more independence than males, while males must perceive more structure than females in order to use their abilities.

When children first learn new activities it is sometimes frustrating because they know what they want to say or do but to make it happen hasn't become a reality. When children observe the parents as proud and behind their efforts, they tend to go beyond the frustration and are able to accept the challenge because it is rewarded. If children also see parents as accepting and dealing with their own challenges and frustration, they will realize this is part of growth. Self Actualization does not come from contented, unquestioning, tranquil lives but from questioning, striving and challenging growth. Just as a baseball player must learn to go beyond the frustration of practicing over and over how ti hit the ball further and further and faster and faster, so must the gifted child practice with the intellect until ideas become more and more precise. These children need to be helped in their quest for intellectual growth just as the baseball player needs coaching.

Many people believe that the gifted child can "make it" on their own, but this is not true. They must have someone who appreciates their intellect and the appreciation, encouragement and guidance is what enables the child to use his/her full abilities.

"A SEED WITHOUT WATER, EARTH, SUN AND TIME CANNOT GROW AND THE INTELLECT WITHOUT EMOTIONAL ENCOURAGEMENT, INTELLECTUAL STIMULATION, TIME TO THINK AND POSSIBILITIES TO ASK QUESTIONS CANNOT GROW." - Margot L. King

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